

REMARKS

Summary of the Office Action

Claims 6, 9, 11 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamaoka et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,404,729) (hereinafter "Yamaoka") in view of Kuroda et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,181,657) (hereinafter "Kuroda").

Claims 7, 8, 10, 12, 13 and 15, while objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Summary of the Response to the Office Action

Applicants have canceled claims 6 and 11 and amended claims 7-9 and 12-14 in light of the Office Action's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 7 and 12. Also, Applicants have added new claims 16-18 to differently describe embodiments of the disclosure of the instant application's specification. Accordingly, claims 7-10 and 12-18 are currently pending for consideration.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 6, 9, 11 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamaoka in view of Kuroda. Applicants have canceled claims 6 and 11 and amended claims 7-9 and 12-14 in light of the Office Action's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 7 and 12. More particularly, claim 7 has been amended to include the features of claim 6 and claim 12 has been amended to include the features of claim 11. Accordingly, newly-amended claims 7 and 12 are in prima-facie condition for allowance.

Furthermore, Applicants respectfully assert that dependent claims 8-10 and 13-15 are allowable at least because of their dependence from amended independent claim 7 or 12, and the reasons set forth above.

Newly-Added Claims

Applicants have added new claims 16-18 to differently describe embodiments of the disclosure of the instant application's specification. These newly-added claims are allowable at least because of their dependence from amended independent claim 7 or 12, and the reasons set forth above.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that the pending claims currently under consideration are in condition for allowance, and respectfully request reconsideration and timely allowance of these claims. Should the Examiner feel that there are any issues outstanding after consideration of this response, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned representative to expedite prosecution. A favorable action is awaited.

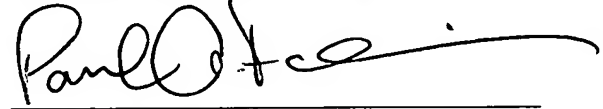
EXCEPT for issue fees payable under 37 C.F.R. § 1.18, the Commissioner is hereby authorized by this paper to charge any additional fees during the entire pendency of this application including fees due under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 and 1.17 which may be required, including

any required extension of time fees, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-0573.

This paragraph is intended to be a **CONSTRUCTIVE PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME** in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a)(3).

Respectfully submitted,

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